Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph **[0068]** beginning at page 17, line 2, with the following:

--**[0068]** One-step real-time quantitative RT-PCR was used for all mRNA quantitation according to the protocol provided by Ng et al., *supra*. The *CRH* primer sequences were 5'-GCCTCCCATCTCCCTGGAT-3' (forward; SEQ ID NO:1) and 5'-TGTGAGCTTGCTGTGCTAACTG-3' (reverse; SEQ ID NO:2), and the dual-labelled fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM)TCCTCCGGGAAGTCTTGGAAATGGC(TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:3). Calibration curves for *CRH* mRNA quantifications were prepared by serial dilutions of high performance liquid chromatography-purified single stranded synthetic DNA oligonucleotides (Genset Oligos, Singapore) specifying a 89 bp *CRH* amplicon (Genbank Accession No. NM_000756), with concentrations ranging from $1X10^7$ copies to $1X10^1$ copies. Absolute concentrations of *CRH* mRNA were expressed as copies/mL of plasma. The sequences of the synthetic DNA oligonucleotides for *CRH* calibrations were 5'-GGAGCCTCCCATCTCCCTGGATCTCACCTTCCACCTCCTCCGGGAAGTCTTGGAAAT GGCCAGGGCCGAGCAGTTAGCACAGCAAGCTCACAGCA-3' (SEQ ID NO:4). A calibration curve for *GAPDH* quantification was prepared as previously described, with results expressed in pg/mL plasma (Ng et al., *supra*).--

Please replace paragraph **[0080]** beginning at page 20, line 17, with the following:

--**[0080]** One-step real-time quantitative RT-PCR was used for all mRNA quantitation as described by Ng et al., *supra*. The primers for all of the hPL, hCG-β and GAPDH RT-PCR assays were intron-spanning. The hPL primer sequences were 5'-CATGACTCCCAGACCTCCTTC-3' (sense; SEQ ID NO:5) and 5'-TGCGGAGCAGCTCTAGATTG-3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:6), and the dual-labeled fluorescent

probe was 5'-(FAM)TTCTGTTGCGTTTCCTCCATGTTGG(TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:7). The hCG-β primer sequences were 5'-CTACTGCCCCACCATGACCC-3' (sense; SEQ ID NO:8) and 5'-TGGACTCGAAGCGCACATC-3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:9), and the dual-labeled fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM)CCTGCCTCAGGTGGTGTGCAACTAC(TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:10). Calibration curves for hPL and hCG-β quantifications were prepared by serial dilutions of high performance liquid chromatography-purified single stranded synthetic DNA oligonucleotides (Genset Oligos, Singapore) specifying the hPL and hCG-β amplicons, respectively, with concentrations ranging from $1X10^7$ copies to $1X10^1$ copies. These assays were able to detect 100 copies of the respective calibrator targets. Absolute concentrations of hPL and hCG-β mRNA were expressed as copies/ml of plasma. Previous data have shown that such single stranded oligonucleotides reliably mimic the products of the reverse transcription step and produce calibration curves that are identical to those obtained using T7-transcribed RNA (Bustin, *supra*). The sequences of the synthetic DNA oligonucleotides for hPL and hCG-β calibrations were 5'-
TGCGGAGCAGCTCTAGATTGGATTTCTGTTGCGTTTCCTCCATGTTGGAGGGTGTCG
GAATAGAGTCTGAGAAGCAGAAGGAGGTCTGGGAGTCATGC-3' (SEQ ID NO:11)
and 5'-
GATGGACTCGAAGCGCACATCGCGGTAGTTGCACACCACCTGAGGCAGGGCCGGCA
GGACCCCCTGCAGCACGCGGGTCATGGTGGGGCAGTAGCC-3' (SEQ ID NO:12),
respectively. A calibration curve for GAPDH quantification was prepared as previously described by Ng et al, *supra*, with results expressed in pg/ml plasma.--

Please replace paragraph **[0105]** beginning at page 28, line 12, with the following:

--**[0105]** QRT-PCR assays for the detection of GAPDH, hPL, hCGβ, and CRH mRNA were described previously (Ng. et al., *Clin. Chem.*, **48**:1212-1217, 2002; Ng et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **100**:4748-4753, 2003; and Ng et al., *Clin. Chem.*, **49**:727-731, 2003). The primer sequences for the TFPI2 assay were 5'- ACAAATTTCTACACCTGGGAGGC –3'

(sense; SEQ ID NO:13) and 5'- CGGCAAACTTTGGGAACTTTT -3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:14), and the dual-labeled fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM) TGCGACGATGCTTGCTGGAGGA (TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:15). FAM and TAMRA represented 6-carboxyfluorescein and 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine, respectively. The primer sequences for KISS1 quantification were 5'- GCCCAGGCCAGGACTGA –3' (sense; SEQ ID NO:16) and 5'- GCCAAGAAACCAGTGAGTTCATC -3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:17), and the dual-labelled fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM) CCTCAAGGCACTTCTAGGACCTGGCTCTTC (TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:18). The PLAC1 assay primer sequences were 5'-ATTATCCCCAGCTGCCAGAA –3' (sense; SEQ ID NO:19) and 5'-GCAGCCAATCAGATAATGAACCA -3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:20), and the dual-labelled fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM) AAGAAATCCTCACTGGACGGCTTCCTG (TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:21). The primer sequences for the β-globin assay were 5'-GCTGCACTGTGACAAGCTGC -3' (sense; SEQ ID NO:22) and 5' GCACACAGACCAGCACGTTG -3' (antisense; SEQ ID NO:23), and the fluorescent probe was 5'-(FAM) CGTGGATCCTGAGAACTTCAGGCTC (TAMRA)-3' (SEQ ID NO:24).--

Please replace paragraph **[0106]** beginning at page 28, line 29, with the following:

--**[0106]** Calibration curves for hPL, βhCG, CRH, TFPI2, KISS1, PLAC1, and β-globin mRNA quantification were prepared by serial dilutions of high performance liquid chromatography-purified single stranded synthetic DNA oligonucleotides as described by Bustin et al., *J. Mol. Endocrinol.*, **25**:169-193, 2000 (Genset Oligos, Singapore) specific for the respective amplicons, with concentrations ranging from 1 X 10^6 copies to 10 copies. The sequences of the synthetic DNA oligonucleotides for hPL, βhCG and CRH calibration were described previously (see Ng et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **100**:4748-4753, 2003 and Ng et al., *Clin. Chem.*, **49**:727-731, 2003). The sequences of the synthetic DNA oligonucleotides for TFPI2, KISS1, PLAC1, and β-globin calibrators were 5'-CGCCAACAATTTCTACACCTGGGAGGCTTGCGACGATGCTTGCTGGAGGATAGAAA

AAGTTCCCAAAGTTTGCCGGCTG -3' (SEQ ID NO:25), 5'-CTGCCCAGGCCAGGACTGAGGCAAGCCTCAAGGCACTTCTAGGACCTGGCTCTTCTCACCAAGATGAACTCACTGGTTTCTTGGCAG -3' (SEQ ID NO:26), 5'-ACAAATTATCCCCAGCTGCCAGAAGAAGAAATCCTCACTGGACGGCTTCCTGTTTCCTGTGGTTCATTATCTGATTGGCTGCAGG -3' (SEQ ID NO:27) and 5-TGAGCTGCACTGTGACAAGCTGCACGTGGATCCTGAGAACTTCAGGCTCCTGGGCAACGTGCTGGTCTGTGTGCTGG -3' (SEQ ID NO:28), respectively. Except for GAPDH mRNA, absolute concentrations of all transcripts were expressed as copies/ng of total placental RNA and copies/ml of plasma for placental tissues and maternal plasma, respectively. The calibration curve for GAPDH quantification was prepared by serial dilutions of human total RNA (Ng. et al., *Clin. Chem.*, **48**:1212-1217, 2002).--

Please insert the accompanying paper copy of the Sequence Listing, page numbers 1-8, at the end of the application.